



Caring For Wildlife

With St. Lucie County's human populations more than doubling over the past two decades, much of our native wildlife is struggling to find new territory — sometimes in our own backyards. Why not plant native trees, shrubs and ground cover to provide small greenspaces for wildlife? If your property is large, consider putting a conservation easement over part of it and keep it natural.

Most folks have the best intentions to aid displaced or slightly injured wildlife, but often times the animal has a better chance of surviving on its own. Here are some guidelines you can use to determine if an animal needs help:

As in any emergency situation, if you find an animal that seems injured, displaced or in danger, the first thing you should do is survey the area. Put all dogs and cats inside or away from the animal immediately. Then call your local animal rehabilitators for further guidance and animal ID.

If the animal is in immediate danger or obviously injured, consider helping it. Call a rehabilitator for advice. It's of utmost importance for you to keep yourself safe as injured animals will often display erratic behavior and are frequently aggressive due to pain and fear.

If the animal is not obviously injured or in immediate danger, observe it from a safe and non-threatening distance. Be sure the animal needs your help before displacing it. Remember, it has a better chance of survival if its injury is minor. And it's better if the animal can find new territory on its own, rather than displacing it. If you're not sure the animal needs help, call a wildlife rehabilitator.

If it's a baby bird or squirrel, look in the surrounding trees for a nest. Place the bird or squirrel back in the nest. If the nest is too high, you can place the animal in a wicker basket or box with pine needles on a branch as high as you can reach in the same tree. It's okay if the parent sees you touch the baby. Keep observing it to see if its parent returns. If the animal seems abandoned, call a wildlife rehabilitator.

While raccoons are nocturnal animals, you may see a mother raccoon out during the day in search of food. If so, just observe from a safe distance. If the animal is acting strangely or has a discharge from its eyes or nose, it may be rabid. Call 911 for animal control. Remember, raccoons have razor-sharp claws and teeth, so let trained professionals trap the animal for testing.

When driving, if you're slowing down or stopping for wildlife, put your hazard lights on immediately so that other drivers know to be cautious. Never place a turtle back to the side of the road from which it came, as it will try again to cross the road as soon as you leave.

To prevent wild animals from becoming a problem, refrain from feeding them. With the exception of seed left in bird feeders, giving wildlife hand-outs is a bad idea, as they may become malnourished and/or dependent on humans. Pet food left on a screened porch can invite some animals to rip through the screen. Don't put trash cans out early, and if you add a tablespoon of ammonia in the can, it will hide the food aromas.

Do Not Relocate Animals to the Oxbow

Please refrain from relocating Gopher Tortoises and other wildlife to the Oxbow Eco-Center. While the Oxbow may seem like the perfect place, it's really just a small patch of green for its resident wildlife and can only sustain a certain number of animals. Natural lands have a carrying capacity that is limited by food, water, and size. Also, you may be bringing a sick animal to the Oxbow which can infect our current population. By relocating animals here, you may be breaking up the harmony and health of your wild neighbors. This includes Gopher Tortoises.

WILDLIFE REHABILITATORS AND EMERGENCY NUMBERS:

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FFWCC)

Emergency Wildlife Alert

Hotline # 888-404-3922

www.floridaconservation.org

If you see any listed species (e.g. gopher tortoise, Sandhill Crane, etc.) that is injured or in danger, call the FFWCC Hotline immediately.

Treasure Coast Wildlife Hospital

772-286-6200

www.tcwh.org

8438 SW 48th Avenue

Palm City, FL 34990

Creature Safe Place

(772) 468-6616

www.creaturesafeplace.com

4500 McCarty Road

Fort Pierce FL 34945

Wildlife Rehabilitation and Refuge Center

(772) 221-1231; (772) 335-6606

pager **561-575-3399**

www.usfishandwildlifeservice.com

5255 SW Savage Street

Palm City, FL 34990

Busch Wildlife Sanctuary

561-575-3399

www.buschwildlife.com

2500 Jupiter Park Drive

Jupiter, FL 33458

Also Check out:

www.wildliferehabber.org

OTHER HELPFUL LINKS

St. Lucie County Animal Control

772-871-5042

www.stlucieco.gov/eoc/animal_control.htm

15305 Midway Road

Fort Pierce, FL 34945

Humane Society -- Treasure Coast

772-220-3610

www.hstc1.org

4100 SW Leighton Farm Avenue

Palm City, FL 34990

St. Lucie County Cooperative Extension Service

(772) 462-1660

www.stlucie.ifas.ufl.edu

8400 Picos Road

Fort Pierce, FL 34945